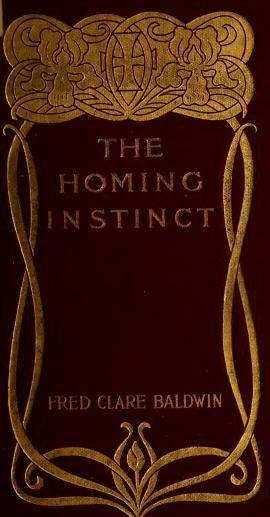
BT 921 B25





Class BT92

Book _____B_3

Gopyright No.

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.





THE HOMING INSTINCT

By FRED CLARE BALDWIN



NEW YORK: EATON & MAINS CINCINNATI: JENNINGS & GRAHAM

BT921 Bas

Copyright, 1913, by FRED CLARE BALDWIN

2

#.50 ©CI.A332677 ~~/

DEDICATION

THIS BOOKLET IS DEDICATED BY ITS AUTHOR TO THOSE CHURCHES AND CONGREGATIONS WHOSE KINDNESS AND PATIENCE THROUGH A PERIOD OF TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS HAVE HELPED HIM TO BELIEVE IN THE GOODNESS OF GOD BECAUSE OF THE BEAUTY OF HUMAN FRIENDSHIP.



CONTENTS

PAGE
Foreword
Immortality: The Homeward Instinct of the Human Soul
Immortality as Reflected from the Old Testament Scriptures
Immortality as Assured in the New Testament Scriptures
Foretastes of Immortality 53



FOREWORD

THE following essays on immortality do not assume to approach the question from the standpoint of pure logic, or in the spirit of scientific research; but it is hoped that they may not prove to be illogical, or essentially unscientific. One of the most hopeful signs of the times is the fact that as religion is becoming more practically religious, so is science becoming more thoroughly scientific. And the latter is nowhere so well evidenced as in the fairer treatment that is being rendered the religious element of human nature. We no longer account for the religious phenomena of mankind by the assumption of a ghost story introduced early in the history of the

race. The puerility of such an explanation, let us thank heaven, has at last become apparent. The tendencies of human nature that have been with it from the beginning, that have stayed with it through the centuries, that have never left it for however brief a period, that appear and reappear through all the stages of human progress—these tendencies have at last come to be regarded not only as indestructible but as highly indicative: they must be reckoned with on a serious basis. These essays are an humble effort to show with what force the instinct of immortality asserts itself in human life: and to reveal the worth of that fact as an evidence for immortality itself. The reader himself must be the judge as to the merits of the attempt.

IMMORTALITY: THE HOME-WARD INSTINCT OF THE HUMAN SOUL

THE instinct of life is the strongest and most persistent of all concerning which we have any knowledge. Everything that lives clings to life with an eloquent tenacity. In the so-called vegetable kingdom such a thing as suicide is unknown; and there seems to be absolutely no instance of indifference to existence. Every grass-blade in the meadow; every patch of lichen or moss clinging to tree-trunk or bowlder; every flowering shrub manufacturing new root-stock in the darker laboratory of the soil while in the upper air it works out its miracle of fragrance and beauty; every old oak ramifying the earth with his hungry roots and expanding his clamorous leaves to the vitalizing sunlight; every green cedar clinging to the frowning face of some tall cliff and wrestling there, at so great disadvantage, with the heartless winds—everything that derives its sustenance from the soil seems bound to live while life is possible—and not merely while its environment is favorable or agreeable! Perhaps this is the thought that rings and reechoes in the closing couplets of the one poem which marks the fame of our great novelist:

Creeping where no life is seen, A rare old plant is the Ivy Green.

Creeping where grim death has been, A rare old plant is the Ivy Green.

Creeping on, where time has been, A rare old plant is the Ivy Green.

The importance of these illustrations from the realm of vegetable life is not to be overlooked by the eager inquirer after truth. Most of us may not affect to despise that before which so great a thinker as Alfred Tennyson stood with uncovered head and uplifted hope:

Flower in the crannied wall. I pluck you out of the crannies: Hold you here, root and all, in my hand, Little flower-but if I could understand What you are, root and all, and all in all, I should know what God and man is.

If in the animal world, as we commonly apply the phrase, this instinct operates less blindly, it also acts more powerfully. There is not a living, moving creature but that apprehends what we call death and recoils from its approach. It is this that accounts for the struggle of the captured fish, and, cruel as it may seem, for the pleasure of the fisherman. It is this that accounts for the furious flutterings of the caged bird when some strange hand has invaded his prison-home; for the sensational alarm of the barnvard brood when a hawk is seen circling with such apparent innocence in the distant sky; for the swift dartings of the rabbit, the meteoric flight of the fox, the fierce and haunted look in the eyes of a stag at bay: everything that breathes loves its life and defends it to the last. We cannot make too much of this great though familiar fact of nature. It has a definite bearing upon the doctrine of immortality. Its message to us is this: life is persistent; life abhors death.

Now, the human mind is so

clouded with the conceit of reason that it fails to recognize in any such measure as it should the sway of instinct within its own self. There is the same instinctive clinging to life and the same recoil from death in man that we find in the lower orders of being. The automatic closing of the eyelids when the visual organ is threatened from without, the spontaneous uplifting of the hand to ward off an impending blow, the suddenly increased beating of the heart in face of any special danger or alarm—these and a score of kindred impulses have their origin in that same instinct of life we have been tracing.

It is the instinct of life in man that impels human reason to the discovery and adoption of such modes and principles of action as tend toward the safe-guarding and promotion of the race itself. It is the same instinct that has stirred the scientific sense of man to that relentless pursuit of all life's lurking foes which so conspicuously marks the age to which we belong.

But in what measure man is greater and nobler than all other earthly creatures with which he is associated in the fellowship of life, in that measure also does the instinct of life in him take on a nobler and grander expression; until it becomes what may truly be called the instinct of immortality. The longer we live, the longer we desire to live. This may appear to be a trite remark, but it is worthy of our profoundest attention. It embodies a fact surcharged with the magnetism of a future life. If it is a good thing to have lived sixty, eighty, one hundred years, the soul of man insists upon the wisdom of going on past these swiftly overtaken milestones, and, looking forward, discerns no point or place where it shall become willing to surrender existence. It is not the hope of immortality we are now discussing. but the instinct of life, with its last beautiful petal thrown out toward —what? Is the human soul less sure of itself than the flower of the field? On this last petal is there no light of day to dawn? Nay, we must show ourselves to be better botanists than that: could this unfolding flower of the human soul have turned toward aught but the actual dawning of an actual day?

In his best moods man assumes—

simply and sublimely assumes—that he is to live forever. The normal old gentleman of eighty will plant an oak on his lawn and forget to have one depressing thought. He links himself to the future; he does not see death. The splendid manner in which the true historian appropriates to himself all the past, and the true poet assumes ownership over all the future, is as refreshing as it is instructive. History and poetry are monumental expressions of an instinct in man that recoils from extinction. And in his best moods. we repeat, man does not regard himself as an ephemeral creature, but as one who in some deep and permanent sense is identified with all time and all eternity. This is the kind of being man is; and the question becomes, How came he to be this kind of being? And what does the fact signify?

'Tis the divinity that stirs within us;
'Tis Heaven itself that points out an hereafter,

And intimates eternity to man.

Thus answers Addison.

Not in entire forgetfulness, And not in utter nakedness, But trailing clouds of glory, do we come From God, who is our home.

It is to be regretted that Wordsworth could not keep to this clear strain throughout the stanza of which the above is a part. What he termed the philosophic mind was a little too formidable for him. He should have continued to trust the deep intuitions out of which arose youth's vision splendid. Tennyson, on the other hand, while not less philosophic, remained true to instinct:

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too deep for sound or foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Shall we say, then, that man instinctively knows himself to be immortal? Yes, for that is what he does invariably assume to be the truth of the matter when he is not thinking too intently or too specifically upon the subject. The reasoning faculty, when in too severe action, inhibits the instinctive processes of the mind. And with metaphysics one can introduce chaos anywhere. But metaphysics has had little to do with most of the things that tend to make human life richer and hap-

pier. Civilization is the outgrowth of the social instinct in man; it did not wait for the sanction of metaphysics. The home is the outgrowth of an instinct calling for a much narrower sphere in which to reveal its splendors; but home-life at its best does not depend upon metaphysics. The instinct of immortality —to what shall we point as its outgrowth? To the end of time it will continue to line the hill-crests of life with castellated dreams of heaven, and to lure the lagging feet of reason along its ascending path.

How often do we hear it said: "Immortality? Heaven? O, these are but a mirage of the soul with its longings!" And what a shallow explanation is this, or, rather, what a splendid illustration from a shallow mood of the cynic! We know,

20

fortunately, the mechanism of the mirage. It is a process of lightbending whereby are lifted into view objects which would otherwise have remained hidden behind the horizon ofttimes by many miles. The shallowness of the cynic's remark reveals itself in his assumption that the mirage is essentially a delusion. The superb fact, on the contrary, is this, that a real ship below the horizon answers to the pictured vessel in the sky. Yes, heaven and immortality are indeed a mirage. To their beautiful vision, crowning forever the mists of earthly care and sorrow, there is something real and substantial answering. The homeward instinct of the human soul did not create this vision, although it does sustain a most vital relation to the recognition of the latter's worth.

But the instinct of immortality does not assert itself with equal force and clearness in all men-and why?

First, because some are not so willing as others to recognize its presence. There is a type of mind which will not trust a single instinct or intuition or emotion of the soul on the side of its larger and nobler activity. This is the type of mind that believes its doubts and doubts its beliefs; that enthrones reason, and tears down every beautiful thing in the soul in order that it may build this throne. Then reason turns autocrat with a vengeance: and there is no one so unreasonable as Reason, the autocrat.

Secondly, because some are not so wise as others to seek that atmosphere of life, and more especially 22

that altitude, which will best serve to arouse and develop this instinct. The waterfowl, from whose great flight Bryant drew such profound lessons of faith, was in the upper air; its silently moving form was limned against the blue depths of heaven. And he would surpass Bryant in fame who might explain to us how the carrier-pigeon performs her wonderful feat. All we know about it is that when she has been liberated from her temporary prison -one hundred, two hundred, one thousand miles away from her home -she first makes a more or less spiral flight toward heaven, and then, among the mysteries of the upper air, strikes a sure path homeward! They tell us, to be sure, that this homing instinct is strongest and surest when a nestful of wee pigeons at the end of those one thousand miles are crying and clamoring for the warm touch of their mother's breast. But this is no explanation. It is the same as saying that the instinct homeward is strongest when it has the holiest reasons for its assertion.

So, the groveling must not be surprised if he fails to find the homeward, heavenward instinct surging in his soul. The visions of life are on the hilltops; and man was made, both physically and spiritually, for the upward look. The normal tendencies of the human soul are all and always upward. This is why man is forever praying, forever clinging to the unseen, forever groping toward God and a goal of destiny other than the grave. Only in the upper vistas of thought and action will one

THE HOMING INSTINCT 24

find his heart attuned to sing with Anna Letitia Barbauld:

Life! we've been long together. Through pleasant and through cloudy weather:

'Tis hard to part when friends are dear; Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear; Then steal away, give little warning. Choose thine own time: Say not good-night, but in some brighter

clime Bid me good-morning.

IMMORTALITY AS REFLECT-ED FROM THE OLD TES-TAMENT SCRIPTURES

WE have seen that the instinct of life is universal, and that in man it takes on increased dignity and becomes the instinct of immortality. We have seen also that for the fuller recognition and development of this instinct it is incumbent on man to seek the right atmosphere and altitude.

To man, clinging to life and recoiling from death, clamoring for immortality and shuddering at the thought of extinction—to man so constituted comes that great oracle of truth, the Bible. The general attitude of the Holy Scriptures toward the doctrine of immortality is that of economy so far as the disclosure of details is concerned, but of most abundant generosity in its assurance of the fundamental fact itself. There is a world of suggestion in that utterance of our Lord, "If it were not so, I would have told you." In these words he taught us to value that fine form of evidence which every man may discover in his own breast, that upwardly reaching instinct, that eternal clinging to life and existence which we have been tracing. His strong and tender words that follow in the fourteenth chapter of Saint John are as a trellis let down from heaven to the clasping vine of the heart's own deathless hope.

The economy of the divine Word in its treatment of immortality is not without an explanation that will appeal to the thoughtful. The emphasis of all biblical instruction and exhortation is placed upon human life in the totality of its need; upon the quality of life to be lived here. now, hereafter, forever! The Bible assumes that before a man begins even to inquire into the probability of a future life it were better for him to ascertain whether in any true and proper sense he is living at all. And with life once properly conceived and measurably realized, the only remaining need is a positive assurance of its unbroken continuance. There are, indeed, many things we desire to know, which in the fullness of time we shall know: but the Bible confines itself almost exclusively to what we need to know. The great cathedral window with its marvelous refractions was not placed

where it is to lead the curious gaze of the worshiper into outlying fields of landscape and light; its purpose and mission are, rather, to let the light of an outer world fall in softened splendor upon the bowed head or uplifted face of the worshiper himself. The doctrine of immortality as presented in the Holy Scriptures is like that window: through its chromatic blendings all real and earnest life is enriched with a fullness of light from the land of its goal.

And here, again, the matter of one's personal attitude claims our consideration. There is a sense in which every reader makes his own Bible. If one brings to its rare pages the spirit of criticism only, he will find much with which to feed the spirit of criticism; for, it is a divine book embodying a large meas-

ure of the human element. If one brings to it his intellectual wants rather than his spiritual needs, he is destined to go away disappointed. If, on the other hand, one comes to this oracle laden and bowed and humbled with a profound sense of his needs; if he brings to it a hungry heart and a willingness to be led in the way of life, he will issue forth from its every perusal with an increased faith and an intensified assurance. Aldrich has shown us how to study the Bible and all other books of life:

To the sea-shell's spiral round 'Tis your heart that brings the sound: The soft sea-murmurs that you hear Within, are captured from your ear. You do poets and their song A grievous wrong, If your own soul does not bring To their high imagining As much beauty as they sing.

30

In the Old Testament Scriptures we have immortality assumed rather than asserted, reflected rather than revealed; and to one who reads with an open mind there can be no doubt as to this assumption and reflection. To illustrate:

"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Gen. 5. 24). Can we for one moment concede or conceive that the Jews understood these words to mean that Enoch had suffered annihilation? If so, what was there in his annihilation that, to their minds, made it a specially fitting reward for conspicuous piety? Was not their mental picture, rather, the more inspiring one—that the patriarch had gone out from the scenes of his earthly labors leaning, as it were, on the arm of God with whom he was to

enjoy the closest communion henceforth and forever? There can be but one answer to this question.

"And Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and he was gathered to his people" (Gen. 25. 8). Now, can we assume that the people of the old dispensation understood that the gathering place here referred to was nothing more nor less than oblivion? Oblivion, we submit, would constitute a most vague and unsatisfactory gathering place. One cannot well conceive the marshaling of annihilated spirits on the plain of oblivion! The Jewish mind was peculiarly fond of tangibilities; but there is nothing more intangible than oblivion. No, the thought of our spiritual ancestors was that the grand old man had indeed been ushered

into the actual company of a congenial host.

If we take such a passage as Deut. 33. 27, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms," and remove from it the background of immortality, what special comfort or encouragement or inspiration does it afford or suggest? Of what remarkable advantage are everlasting arms to a career limited by a few fleeting years? The devout and inquiring minds among the ancients were not so different from ours as that they could derive comfort and consolation from words without practical meaning. Everlasting arms, and everlasting lives leaning on these arms, are thought pictures that go naturally and necessarily together.

King David seems to have drawn

some actual comfort and solace from the meditation involved in those oftrepeated words, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Sam. 12. 23). But how could that solace have been derived from any conception of things short of a future life?

From the book of Psalms, that great hymnal of Israel—and of the Christian world, for that matter we should expect to catch again and again the triumph-strains of immortality; nor does the expectation go unrewarded. What, for example, is to be thought of such an outburst as this?—"Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Do we get

the underlying thought of this passage? There is one thing that cannot perish, that a just and loving God will not permit to die—a righteous life. It has no end! But listen to the sweet strain as it proceeds on its way: "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore" (Psa. 16. 9-11). It takes the light of eternity to account for the splendor that flashes from these words.

Without entering into all the doctrinal suggestions of the passage let us reflect upon these glowing words of the prophet Daniel, and ask ourselves what meaning would remain to them if the thought of immortality were removed from the vista which they create: "And many of

them that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12. 2, 3).

And with what a beautiful and entrancing future-ward strain do the Old Testament Scriptures come to their close! The words of Malachi (3. 16-18) have been often and often quoted to sustain personal integrity in the midst of almost overwhelming corruption; but as a tribute to immortality perhaps they have not been properly appreciated: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." Verily, the divine coronation, according to this splendid piece of imagery, was a matter reserved for the future; and, verily, it was looked upon as an event in whose transcendent glory all the true and the faithful would be permitted to share!

So much for the doctrine of immortality as reflected from the Old Testament Scriptures. Our review of the subject has been brief; but enough has been done, we trust, to reveal the wealth of what to some may be a new field of inquiry, for it is all too generally assumed that the Old Testament is silent upon the subject of immortality. We have

seen that there is not an absolute silence as to direct teaching, and that what silence does prevail is not the silence of doubt or denial, but the silence of assent and assumption.

They were men and women much like ourselves—those generations of old. They wondered at the mysteries of existence just as we do: and seized, just as we do, upon whatever tangible evidence of the truth they were so fortunate as to find. They caught the vision—a percentage of them at least—that serious life cannot escape service. They groaned, as we do, when the burdens of life became excessively heavy; but, like ourselves, they went staggering on in the hard-beaten path. They answered to the call of courage amidst the carnage of strife. They sowed and reaped; they bought and sold; they married and were given in marriage; they enacted, again and again, the same drama of life as that in which we are engaged; they toiled and wept and laughed just about as we are doing, but with less to assure them; and they dreamed the indestructible dream of Immortality.

IMMORTALITY AS ASSURED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

Whoever in the spirit of reverent inquiry approaches the New Testament Scriptures with a view to ascertaining their attitude toward immortality must become profoundly impressed with three outstanding facts: The peculiar positiveness of our Lord's utterances upon that subject; the wonderful reality and nearness of the unseen world to the minds and experiences of the disciples after Pentecost; the unutterable glory of every disclosure that was made to them of the celestial life.

The self-assertions of Jesus of Nazareth, had they not been true,

were sufficient in themselves for the termination of his career without the violence of the cross. No other teacher has ever appeared among men who has dared to make such utterances as he made: none other has dared to clothe his utterances with so much of assumed authority: "I am the door of the sheep" (John 10. 7). "I am the good shepherd" (John 10. 11). "I am the bread of life" (John 6. 35). "I am the true vine" (John 15. 1). "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14. 6). "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8. 58). "I and my Father are one" (John 10. 30). Exclamation points are not sufficient for the punctuation of such utterances as these, and Christendom might well echo with songs of gratitude that there was one evangelist who felt the full weight

of importance that attached itself to these sublime self-assertions of the Christ.

Here was a Teacher who never speculated; who never philosophized; who never appealed either to the inductive or deductive processes of thought; who never said, "I think"; or, "It is my opinion"; or, "The weight of the evidence is on this side or that"; but whose one and only mode of statement was, "I say unto you!" Here was a teacher who spake not as a student, or a scholar, or a philosopher, or a sage, but as one whose perspective of knowledge was above the mists that blind men's groping thought, and before whose vision the field of eternal truth stretched out its grandeur and glory. A detachment of the temple police was sent out one day to arrest this

Teacher. Coming back to their superiors empty-handed, the only apology or defense they could give was that "Never man spake like this man." Little did they dream that their terse and truthful reply would be echoed back through nineteen hundred years from every crucial circumstance to which human life is heir. If we search for the secret of that power in the presence of which the temple police were swerved from their purpose to arrest the Master, we find it not so much in the words he spake, and not so much in the authority with which he uttered them, as in a certain beautiful fitness between himself and his message. The man and his message were united in a unique oneness. And that is how the matter stands to-day. We call Jesus of Nazareth

our Lord, not because of the miracles he wrought, nor the wisdom he manifested, but simply and supremely because we perceive that he is fit to be followed. He commands our worship and our obedience.

If Jesus Christ is a man-And only a man-I say That of all mankind I cleave to him, And to him will I cleave alway.

If Jesus Christ is a God-And the only God-I swear I will follow him through heaven and hell, The earth, the sea, and the air!

In which terse and telling lines our lamented Gilder has carried the confession of the temple police to its logical conclusion and voiced the honest feeling of an ever-increasing proportion of the human race.

And it was this teacher who said: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." From him also come those astounding self-assertions which climax in the words which for mastery over the hearts and hopes of men have no rivals to-day: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die!"

The wonderful reality of the unseen world to the minds and experiences of the disciples after the day of Pentecost is one of the most entrancing facts encountered by the New Testament student. Before the crucifixion, and as its shadows were deepening around the soul of Christ,

"they all forsook him and fled." They had not sufficient insight and courage to sustain their loyalty to the visible presence of their Lord. In his disaster they saw the crumbling of all their hopes—for all their hopes were centered in a material construction of his Messiahship. But after Pentecost what a change do we behold! Now, no threatening peril of persecution can swerve them from their loyalty to an invisible Lord. His triumphant presence fills the atmosphere of all their thinking. A new background has been given to life. A spiritual kingdom absorbs their energies and sways their motives. And that kingdom they regard, not as a remote possibility, but as an immediate fact. They behold its glory and live in the radiance of its increasing splendor.

They are citizens of two worlds: and through the mystic door of ecstasy they seem to be able almost at will to pass from the one to the other. And yet they are the sanest set of men to whom a colossal practical enterprise was ever committed. So real and so near is the unseen world to these exalted founders of Christianity that they can laugh at martyrdom, and could dare to court its releasing tortures. It was heaven's own light that played upon the countenance of Stephen as the vengeance of men was preparing to crush him. And he was not in the muttering dream of delirium when he cried out, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

Such were the men, and such were the sustaining facts embodied

in the lives and experiences of the men who have taught the world to say, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

The two master minds of the apostolic church were Paul and John. The former of these was a man of pronounced scholarly bent, and was possessed of that synthetic type of mind which makes the philosopher; the latter was a man of deep insight, and was withal a mystic. Both were men of unquestioned intellectual integrity—men to whom no appeal could equal that of the truth.

48

And to both these men, from the promontory of their triumphant lives. was it given to gaze into heaven ere yet they were called to abandon the thorn-filled paths of earth. Their reports-for they were not so ungrateful as to hide their pleasures in the recesses of their own memories—are with us, and it is our sure privilege and prerogative to turn as often as the need asserts itself from the turmoils and cares of life to their glowing perusal. "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12. 2-4).

Paul was an orator of no mean ability. Few have equaled him in readiness, fullness, and facility of speech. He was a master in the art of expression. But here, if we may be forgiven the figure, he met his Waterloo. He does not mean to say that he heard or saw anything which it would be wrong to report. He simply says that what he heard transcends the power of human language to relate. For its representation there is no law of syntax or rhetoric or eloquence that is adequate. Very well, thou master marshaler of human speech, in thy confession of defeat our hungry souls find more to feed upon than all the gathered volumes of human philos50

ophy could afford! Nothing that any man has ever said so deeply quickens the divine curiosity of human hope as these few words of thine.

John, the mystic, the man of insight, was not content to leave the alluring task unattempted; and paradoxical as it may seem, we are glad he was not. And John was a poet. Whatever he touched was transfigured with beauty. No one would be content with the heaven which he pictured; yet no one would be content to have the picture withdrawn. All the precious stones known to the ancients went into the colossal foundation walls of his Holy City, the New Jerusalem. Pearls of unimagined size and splendor adorned its alluring gates. walls of jasper rose above the radiant mists of time, massive in their strength and resplendent with the glory of God. Its streets were paved with preciousness and reflected the light that casts no shadow —the light of perfect love. And they were lined with trees whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, leaving a ravished world to wonder what holier purpose their fruit can be made to serve. The throne of God was there with a rainbow for its canopy. In heaven the absolute beauty of law will be revealed and recognized. And there was no night there, with its deepening shadows, its vigils and its heartaches; no night, no sorrow, no pain, no sin, no death!

O scientist of the materialistic school, for what do you bid the world to turn from this picture? With what substitute do you propose to save human hope and retain for human life its essential beauty? O philosopher of the pessimistic school, how long will life remain endurable when your depressing nocturnes have replaced in the hearts of men these chromatic wonders of the painter of Patmos?

FORETASTES OF IMMORTALITY

The assertion has been made in these pages that with life once properly conceived and measurably realized our only remaining need is an assurance of its continuance. But while this is true, and while it is true also that the Scriptures are noticeably economical in their disclosures of the details of the future life, it does not follow that we are without any knowledge on that subject.

There are two things we are in perpetual danger of forgetting: first, how large a field the present is for splendid action; second, how clear and strong is all earnest life as a lens through which to search the 54

future. Real life is immortality be-"And this is eternal life," said our Lord in that great prayer which constitutes the seventeenth chapter of Saint John's Gospel, "that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." To know God as revealed in Jesus Christ; to have seen in that revelation the blended glory of divine justice and holiness and love; to have had one's spiritual sense so awakened as to be able to perceive and appreciate the beauty of the Christ-life; to have come into conscious fellowship with that life through a deliberate and persistent effort to make it one's own—this. saith the Scripture, is eternal life; this is immortality begun. And again: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet

appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear. we shall be like him" (1 John 3. 2). Our fully restored likeness to God will be the crowning fact of our immortality. From that fact will be reflected all the flashing glory that John strove so hard to reproduce in his fadeless picture of the jeweled foundations, the towering jasper walls, the gates of pearl, and the streets of gold.

Well, then, what follows? The molding touch of the Christ-life upon ours, here and now, in the rough and rugged pathway we are pursuing—where our feet are ofttimes bruised by stones and pierced with thorns; where the shadows of sorrow still darken the way, and the storm-voices about us are but slowly yielding up their discord; here, just

here, the molding touch of the Christ-life upon our own is one of the foretastes of immortality. Was not this the theme of Paul's thought when he wrote thus to the Ephesians?—"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, . . . And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

The molding touch of the Christlife upon ours is not wholly a mystic process. It is a process with which we have something to do; and therein lies one of its profoundest joys. It is a process that has to do with the erection within our own selves and by our own hands of Christlike ideals. It is the joy of realizing within our own and very selves something of his immaculate goodness; something of his justice, purity, and patience; something of his essential kindness, gentleness, and love; something of his tender compassion toward the unfortunate, the weak, the erring; something, in short, of his transcendent beauty of being -something of his transfiguration glory! Call it character-making if you please. And if heaven is the one and only adequate explanation of character, the coronation field toward which the blood-stained path of life leads on, the magnetic morn toward which the unfolding flowers of virtue are ever and instinctively turning—then this precious process we call character-making is nothing less than a foretaste of heaven. Its deep thrills of joy are one with that

surging tide of joy which beats against the eternal throne. And it is withal the joy of awakening strength and unfolding power.

But character-making is a mystic process, although not wholly so; and herein also lies one of its profoundest joys. "I am crucified with Christ," said Paul, "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2. 20). The mystical must remain, and will remain, as an essential factor to life and religion whatever becomes of the mythical. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," said our Lord to Nicodemus, "and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so

is every one that is born of the spirit" (John 3. 8). We have no plumb line save our sense of the mystical with which to fathom the depths of meaning that are hidden in these words. And there is joy in mystery when mystery is kind.

The atmosphere of all sincere Christian worship is surcharged with the mystical, the miraculous, the divine. The dangers that beset this truth should not depreciate it to our view. There is no primary necessity that faith in any of us should turn into credulity and thence into fanaticism. Sages have worshiped without losing their reason before ever we were born; and not all the wisdom of this keen and critical age has forsaken the altars of God. There is, we repeat, the mystical, the miraculous, the divine,

in all sincere worship. Its recognition is among our tokens of acceptance with God; it is a tangible evidence of his revealing presence; it is one of the heralding currents of the welcoming warmth of the soul's eternal home—a subtle touch of that radiant morn in which we are so soon to have our next great awakening. Whoever Charlotte Elliott was, she has put the world deeply in her debt for the hymn which so sweetly voices the truth with which we have just been dealing:

My God, is any hour so sweet,
From blush of morn to evening star,
As that which calls me to thy feet,
The hour of prayer?

Blest is that tranquil hour of morn,
And blest that solemn hour of eve,
When, on the wings of prayer upborne,
The world I leave.

Then is my strength by thee renewed;
Then are my sins by thee forgiven;
Then dost thou cheer my solitude
With hopes of heaven.

No words can tell what sweet relief

Here for my every want I find;

What strength for warfare, balm for grief,

What peace of mind.

Hushed is each doubt, gone every fear;
My spirit seems in heaven to stay;
And e'en the penitential tear
Is wiped away.

Lord, till I reach that blissful shore, No privilege so dear shall be, As thus my inmost soul to pour In prayer to thee.

And why should we not include the joy of service as one of the fore-tastes of heaven and immortality? I suppose that in heaven we shall not be so superior to the angels as to despise their chief source of happiness. And this is what we read of them in Heb. 1. 14: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to

62

minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" But under the head of service we have something even more to the point than this: "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me. Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14. 13). And there seems to be nothing in the way of the translation, "do follow along with them." Here is a beautiful distinction. The rest of heaven will not consist of a cessation from serviceable activity, but only from that excess of hardship so incident to service in this preparatory career. The service itself, freed from all circumstances of suffering, will continue. Service, then, that divine process by which we lend ourselves to others and share with them our strength and our joy-service, and the angelic joy that goes with it-is a foretaste of heaven. And this is a most fortunate matter: for of all the fields of opportunity that greet us here none is so constantly at hand and none so easy of access as the field of service. Is one ever happier than when engaged in the effort to make others as happy as himself? If so, it is only when he is seeking to render others even happier than himself. Human kindness is immortality in the bud. And the love from which that kindness flows what is it but the very life of God in the soul of man making that kindness possible and real?

One word more: "I am come," said the Saviour, "that they might

have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10. 10). There is a sense of the fullness of life that tells of immortality. It need not be a constant fact of consciousness to retain its evidential value. Indeed, it may be doubted if anyone could keep it in constant possession. And this is a commendable fact, for life owes its richness to its alternations. But there will come a time, and times again, to every earnest and worthy soul when one's very sense of the fullness of life will place the doctrine of immortality far beyond the need of any other demonstration. All the poets have understood this:

O gift of God! O perfect day: Whereon shall no man work, but play; Whereon it is enough for me, Not to be doing, but to be! Through every fiber of my brain. Through every nerve, through every vein, I feel the electric thrill, the touch Of life, that seems almost too much.

So sang our beloved Longfellow in the song he was pleased to call "A Day of Sunshine." And sunshine is one of the cheapest, and at the same time most abundant, blessings that God has bestowed upon us. Yes, the sunshine of life is one of the foretastes of immortality!

Lowell strikes the same chord in his wonderful exploitation of a perfect day in June:

Now is the high-tide of the year, And whatever of life hath ebbed away Comes flooding back with a ripply cheer Into every bare inlet and creek and bay: Now the heart is so full that a drop o'erfills it: We are happy now because God wills it.

Nor may we omit Browning from this list. He has said some things

that are obscure; but this is transparent:

> The year's at the spring, And day's at the morn: Morning's at seven: The hillside's dew-pearled; The lark's on the wing; The snail's on the thorn: God's in his heaven-All's right with the world!

All's right with the world, thou sweet, strong singer of song; and all's right with thee in that world where thou art still singing, loudly and long! And such a foretaste of heaven as thou hast described in these thrilling strains is worth all the waiting of an expectant year.

It is said that a certain bishop was once asked the way to heaven. "Turn to the right," he replied, "and keep straight ahead." It is one of the rediscovered truths of

modern theology that obedience to this advice brings one immediately to the celestial gates. "For our conversation (round of life)," said Paul to the Philippians, "is in heaven."





Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide Treatment Date: August 2005

Preservation Technologies A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive Cranberry Township. PA 16066 (724) 779-2111

BT

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

0 014 652 442 4